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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 02974 170850Z

21
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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R 170605Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3718
INFO AMCONSUL CAN THO
AMCONSUL BIEN HOA
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMCONSUL NHA TRANG
CINCPAC
USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2974

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, VS
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION POSITIONS ON US ASSISTANCE -
INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE OPPOSITION

REF: SAIGON 2938

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN STRUCK BY ILLOGICAL POSITIONS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WHO ARE CLEARLY, STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PRIVATELY EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO VIET-NAM OF US ASSISTANCE BUT PUBLICLY TAKE STAND AGAINST FURTHER AID TO GOVERNMENT OF PRES THIEU. IN REFTEL, WE STATE BELIEF THESE OPPOSITION LEADERS TAKE SUCH POSITIONS FOR LOCAL POLITICAL REASONS IN BELIEF THAT, WHATEVER THEY SAY, US WILL, IN FINAL ANALYSIS, GIVE VIETNAM WHAT IT NEEDS. THIS BEING CASE, OPPOSTION LEADERS SUCCUMB TO PRESSURES FOR CONFORMITY TO OPPOSITION LINE.

2. SUCH CONFORMITY IS NOT LIMITED TO QUESTION OF US ASSISTANCE.
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 02974 170850Z

WE HAVE NOTED IN PAST MONTHS AN INCREASING TENDENCY OF OPPOSITION

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

POLITICAL FIGURES TO HEW TO A SINGLE LINE. INEVITABLY, IT SEEMS, THIS LINE IS THAT ESPOUSED BY THE MOST REDICALIZED ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION. FURTHER, WE HAVE VERY FREQUENTLY NOTED SHARP DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS OF POLITICAL FIGURES ON MATTERS OF GREAT IMPORT. IT IS QUITE COMMON TO FIND QUITE RADICAL POLITICAL LEADERS WHO WILL SPEAK WITH CONSIDERABLE BALANCE AND RATIONALITY WHEN DISCUSSING POLITICAL MATTERS PRIVATELY.

3. WHILE WE CANNOT FULLY EXPLAIN THIS PHENOMENON, WE HAVE HAD RECENTLY THE FOLLOWING THREE REVEALING CONVERSTIONS WITH ASTUTUE POLITICAL OBSERVERS.

4. SHORTLY AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE FIVE SAIGON DAILIES ON FEB 3, EMBOFF CALLED ON EX-SENATOR DANG VAN SUNG, PUBLISHER OF LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY, CHINH LUAN. DURING THIS CONVERSATION, SUNG REMARKED MUSINGLY THAT CURRENT SITUATION WITHIN THE PRESS STRUGGLE MOVEMENT REMINDED HIM OF VIET MINH DAYS. HE COMMENTED ON THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURES FOR CONFORMANCE TO OPPOSITION LINE AND SAID THAT EVEN HE FELT CONSTRAINED TO FOLLOW THIS LINE, AT LEAST IN PART, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD HELD HIMSELF ALOOF FROM ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PRESS STURGGLE MOVEMENT MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES. WHEN QUESTIONED AS TO HOW SUCH PRESSURES WERE BROUGHT TO BEAR, SUNG COULD BE NO MORE SPECIFIC.

5. RECENTLY, LEADER OF LOWER HOUSE OPPOSITION DEPUTY TRAN VAN TUYEN RELATED AN INTERESTING EPISODE TO US ABOUT AN EARLY MEETING (LATE FALL 1974) OF THE FRONT AGAINST STARVATION. TUYEN SAID THE MEETING HAD AN INDEFINABLE ATMOSPHERE THAT REMINDED HIM OF COMMUNIST MEETINGS (TUYEN SERVED BRIEFLY IN HO CHI MINH'S FIRST GOVT AND HAS SOME EXPERIENCE IN THESE MATTERS). HE SAID SONGS WERE BEING SUNG; NOT COMMUNIST SONGS, BUT REVOLUTIONARY SONGS. THEN MME NGO BA THANH TOOK THE STAND AND DELIVERED A VIOLENT SPEECH AGAINST US INTERVENTION IN VIETNAM. TUYEN SAID SOME OF HIS POEPLE'S SOCIETY BLOC (PSB) DEPUTIES WHO ARE STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST WERE PRESENT. ONE, DEPUTY NGUYEN HUU THOI, THEN BEGAN TO SPEAK, URGING THAT THE ECONOMIC PLIGHT OF THE COUNTRY WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMUNISTS WHO HAD BROUGHT THE WAR TO VIETNAM. BEFORE THOI COULD COMPLETE HIS STATEMENT, RADICALS PRESENT AT THE MEETING WRESTLED THE MICROPHONE FROM HIS HANDS.
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6. PERHAPS MOST REVEALING IS A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH INDEPENDENT DEPUTY VO LONG TRIEU, PUBLISHER AND MANAGING EDITOR OF LEADING SAIGON RADICAL DAILY DAI DAN TOC. EMBOFF ASKED TRIEU WHY HE HAD SIGNED THE "BLOOD LETTER" RELEASED BY 47 OPPOSITION DEPUTIES OF THE LOWER HOUSE WHICH IN EFFECT CALLED FOR AN END TO AID TO VIETNAM WHILE PRES THIEU REMAINED IN OFFICE. TRIEU CLAIMED THAT HE DID NOT SIGN THE LETTER AND DID NOT GIVE PERMIS-

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SION FOR HIS NAME TO BE USED. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS TRUE OF A NUMBER OF OTHER ALLEGED SIGNATORIES AS WELL. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THE LETTER IN SUBSTANCE AND BELIEVED THAT AID WAS NECESSARY FOR THE NATION TO SURVIVE. HE SIAD, HOWEVER, THAT, EVEN THOUGH HE DISAGREED WITH THE LETTER, HE FELT HE COULD NOT DISAPPOINT HIS COLLEAGUES BY DEFECTING FROM THE RANKS ON THIS ISSUE SINCE THAT WOULD HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF CREATING THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION OF DISSENSION WITHIN THE OPPOSITION.

7. TRIEU SIAD THAT, WHILE HE WAS NOT WILLING TO STATE SO PUBLICLY, THERE WERE IN FACT EXTREMELY SERIOUS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN THE OPPOSITION. HE SAID THAT THE OPPOSITION IN VIETNAM WAS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF INTELLECTUALS AND THAT MOST OF THE INTELLECTUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPPOSITION WERE NOT SERIOUS POLITICIANS. HE ACCUSED THEM OF CONSTANTLY "PLAYING AROUND" WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST NOTION OF WHAT BEING AN ACTIVE OPPOSITIONIST ENTAILED.

8. TRIEU THEN REMARKED THAT THESE "SO-CALLED OPPOSITIONISTS" ARE SYSTEMATICALLY AND OPENLY EXPLOITED BY THE RADICAL AND ACTIVIST MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION WHO CAPATALIZE ON THE NAIVETE O THESE "KNOW NOTHINGS" TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE OF THE MOST RADICAL AND IRRESPONSIBLE FORMS OF PROTEST. HE ADDED THAT OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF OPPOSITIONISTS, WHO REALLY WERE ACTIVE AND UNDERSTOOD THE ISSUE, MOST WERE ABOVE ALL ELSE PROPER GENTLEMEN WITH A SENSE OF PROPRIETY AND DECORUM. THE SMALL GROUP OF RADICALS, HOWEVER, WERE NOTORIOUS FOR RESORTING TO ABUSIVE AND IMPROPER BEHAVIOR IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS.

9. ACCORDING TO TRIUE, THESE RADICALS DOMINATED THE MEETINGS BY SHOUTING AND POUNDING ON THE TABLES. HE SAID IT WAS NO CONTEST AS THE REASONABLE AND MODERATE ELEMENTS ALWAYS GAVE UP IN EXASPERATION AND ACCEDED TO THE RADICALS' DEMANDS SIMPLY TO END THE SCREAMING. THESE TACTICS, COMBINED WITH A LACK OF RESPONSIBLE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 SAIGON 02974 170850Z

DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE OPPOSITION, GAVE THE RADICALS A GREAT ADVANTAGE.

10. COMMENT: EMB BELIEVES TRIEU'S DESCRIPTION OF OPPOSITION IS SUBSTANTIALLY ACCURATE, AT LEASE WITH RESPECT TO MORE RADICAL OPPOSITION WHICH HAS OCCUPIED CENTER STAGE IN THE PRESS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION PROTEST MOVEMENTS THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS. WE HAVE NO DIRECT EVIDENCE THAT THE "CREAMERS" AMONG OPPOSITION ARE, IN FACT, COMMUNISTS THOUGH SUCH MOVEMENTS WOULD BE OBVIOUS TARGER FOR INFILTRATION AND THEIR TACTICS ARE TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST TACTICS. WHETHER THIS IS THE CASE OF NOT, HOWEVER, TRIEU'S DESCRIPTION OF INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF OPPOSITION GOES A LONG WAY TOWARD EXPLAINING ILLOGICAL STANDS TAKEN BY OTHERWISE REASONALBE MEN OF SUCH CRITICAL SUBJECTS AS US AID TO VIETNAM.

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